



Preparing and licensing high quality teachers in Pacific Region jurisdictions



Summary



Institute of Education Sciences

U.S. Department of Education



Preparing and licensing high quality teachers in Pacific Region jurisdictions

Summary

September 2007

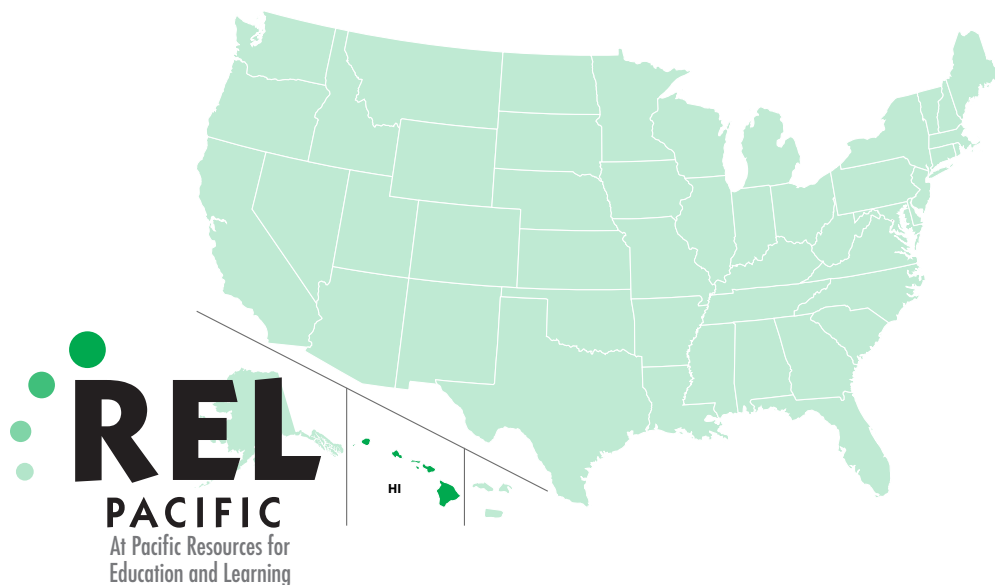
Prepared by

Hilda C. Heine

Pacific Resources for Education and Learning

Masa Akii Emesiochl

Pacific Resources for Education and Learning



Issues & Answers is an ongoing series of reports from short-term Fast Response Projects conducted by the regional educational laboratories on current education issues of importance at local, state, and regional levels. Fast Response Project topics change to reflect new issues, as identified through lab outreach and requests for assistance from policymakers and educators at state and local levels and from communities, businesses, parents, families, and youth. All Issues & Answers reports meet Institute of Education Sciences standards for scientifically valid research.

September 2007

This report was prepared for the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) under Contract ED-06-CO-0024 by Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific administered by Pacific Resources for Education and Learning. The content of the publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

This report is in the public domain. While permission to reprint this publication is not necessary, it should be cited as:

Heine, H., & Emesiochl, M. (2007). *Preparing and licensing high quality teachers* (Issues & Answers Report, REL 2007–No. 031). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>

This report is available on the regional educational laboratory web site at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>.

Summary

Preparing and licensing high quality teachers in Pacific Region jurisdictions

The Pacific Region needs more highly qualified teachers, but current teacher preparation and training programs and certification and licensing processes are not meeting this need.

The provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 for teacher quality direct that all students in U.S. public schools be taught by “highly qualified” teachers. To meet the mandate, teachers must satisfy state certification requirements and demonstrate mastery of the subject area they teach.

Although the Pacific Region entities are trying to meet the teacher-quality mandate, most are still far from fulfilling the minimum education requirements for their teachers. To meet even minimum requirements, some entities will need to develop intensive teacher preparation programs.

The Pacific Region is made up of 10 jurisdictions and the national government of the Federated States of Micronesia. The jurisdictions include the state of Hawaii (not discussed in this report); the territories of Guam and American Samoa; the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands; and the freely associated states of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Palau, and the

Federated States of Micronesia, which includes Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap.

By creating an accurate picture of teacher preparation and licensing across the Pacific Region, this report provides educators and policymakers with knowledge that they can use in addressing teacher quality, preparation, and licensing.

What is the supply of certified teachers in Pacific Region jurisdictions?

Highly qualified teachers are not readily available for school systems in the Pacific Region. Teachers in Pacific Region entities are far from meeting even the minimum education requirement for certification—holding an associate’s degree—except in Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Under-certified teachers are a particularly severe problem in Palau, in the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and in Chuuk and Yap in the Federated States of Micronesia. More worrisome, the share of certified teachers is decreasing in six of the eight entities with data for comparison.

The number of graduates from institutions of higher education in the region is inadequate to meet needs to recruit new teachers and replace retirees. Because of this limited pipeline, state

education agencies will continue to expend substantial resources to recruit qualified teachers from overseas.

What teacher preparation programs are available through Pacific Region institutions of higher education?

The choice of state-approved teacher preparation programs is largely limited to programs offered by two-year accredited community colleges. The only four-year institution in the entities covered in this report is in Guam. Each ministry or department of education also organizes professional development programs geared to meeting the unique needs of teachers in each entity. Summer teacher training programs—allowing teachers from remote communities to gather in a central location to attend courses, institutes, and workshops—are the most important professional development opportunities for teachers in all the Pacific Region entities.

What other resources are available for teacher preparation?

The greatest need for in-service training (basic degree programs for certification) and professional development (training in specific tools and methods) is in areas where many teachers are not certified and have less preparation for teaching—as in American Samoa and the freely associated states. There, teacher preparation programs are constrained by the remoteness of island communities and the distances from schools to central offices and community colleges—the main providers of training. Training for teachers to meet minimum education standards has thus been limited to summer programs and programs offered through distance learning or hybrid

models (some courses online and some face-to-face) that provide bachelor-level training for cohorts of teachers and administrators. Many teachers and administrators complete the cohort programs. Even so, teacher retirement and attrition keep the number of teachers with four-year degrees small, and these off-island programs are temporary, of limited duration, and expensive.

In the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and Guam there is less need for intensive in-service training because most teachers have at least a bachelor's degree, the credential required for certification. While those governments invest less in in-service training, the public schools offer opportunities for professional development, such as training in assessment and various teaching methods.

How do teachers become licensed or certified?

Prompted by No Child Left Behind's teacher-quality mandate, Pacific Region state education agencies have intensified their review of teacher certification and licensing procedures. Over the past two years more than half the entities have revamped their teacher certification system. And many entities are using teacher tests, some national (Praxis, for example) and some local, to determine teachers' knowledge.

Meeting licensing requirements, however, is another issue. Teacher licensing is still in its infancy in most of the Pacific Region. Of the entities covered here, only the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and Guam have teacher certification and licensing systems to track teacher professional development and performance. In the other entities systems are not well established.

Each entity has found it necessary to include emergency or provisional certificates in teacher certification requirements. These certificates were seen as necessary to “protect” practicing teachers who are not certified—and to extend the practice of individual departments or ministries of education of hiring underqualified teachers to meet staffing needs.

How is the quality of teacher preparation programs assessed?

Processes for reviewing and approving teacher preparation programs are also not well established in any of the entities. And across the entities, quality assurance processes are lacking. State education agencies’ input into and scrutiny of teacher preparation programs are minimal. State education agencies complain that the programs are not meeting teacher

training needs, but no mechanisms ensure ongoing dialog and input between the agencies and the institutions of higher education responsible for the programs.

There is a critical need in the Pacific Region for more teachers who are highly qualified, but current teacher preparation and training programs and certification and licensing processes are not adequately meeting this need. Three closely related factors possibly contribute to this situation and deserve further study: the limited supply of new teachers in teacher training programs, the limited availability of teacher training programs geared to meet Pacific Region needs, and the limited implementation of policies to prepare and certify high quality teachers.

September 2007